

Indo-Pacific Global Health Case Competition 2025

Report | Childhood Asthma in the Philippines



Students exploring display of each team's case response.

Thirty multidisciplinary student teams representing 13 universities across nine countries participated in the 2025 Indo-Pacific Global Health Case Competition, hosted by the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences and the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health.

The [annual competition](#) provides an experiential learning platform for students across the Indo-Pacific region to apply their interdisciplinary expertise to a complex global health challenge. This year, teams were tasked with designing an innovative and evidence-based five-year public health intervention aimed at reducing the burden of childhood asthma in the Philippines. Proposals were presented to expert judging panels

comprising academics, public health practitioners and sector professionals.

The Hon. Tim Watts MP, Australian Government Special Envoy for Indian Ocean Affairs, presented awards to the top four teams, commending the competition for its contribution to regional health collaboration. Universiti Malaya (Malaysia) secured first place, while the University of Melbourne claimed second, third and fourth places.

"Health security is vital for the stability and resilience of our region, and bringing together university students from across our region to solve a multifaceted, complex global health problem is exactly the kind of expertise that we need to develop in our future leaders," said Mr Watts.

Asthma affects approximately ten percent of children in the Philippines, driven by factors including air pollution, second-hand smoke exposure, limited access to healthcare and rising e-cigarette use among adolescents. Universiti Malaya's winning proposal focused on a multi-component intervention: replacing wood stoves with locally viable, low-emission alternatives; training teachers and barangay health workers in asthma screening and management; and, introducing education and reward programs to support sustained self-monitoring and treatment adherence.

Professor Jane Gunn AO, Interim Provost of the University of Melbourne, highlighted the competition's role in fostering collaboration and global engagement among students.

"It was fantastic to see a diverse range of students coming together to step into a real global health challenge that's affecting communities in the region," she said.

Participants represented universities from Australia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and Thailand, with several teams travelling interstate and internationally to participate in the final round held at Melbourne Connect. The event also featured opportunities for cultural exchange, professional networking, and engagement with academic mentors and global health experts.



Hon. Tim Watts MP and Prof. Jane Gunn AO with winning team, Universiti Malaya (Malaysia).

Professor Michael Wesley, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global, Culture and Engagement), emphasised the broader learning outcomes of the competition.

“Tackling global health challenges demands global perspectives, cross-cultural understanding and strong international networks. It was inspiring to see our students embrace the opportunity to build these competencies, learn and collaborate alongside their peers from across the region,” he said.

To prepare for the competition, student teams participated in a series of targeted training workshops designed to strengthen their analytical and professional capabilities:

- Introduction to Global Health, led by Dr Matthew Reeve (Melbourne School of Population and Global Health), which introduced global health principles and contextual factors underlying the case study;
- Consulting 101, delivered by Linh Do and Stephen Christopolous (Nous Consulting), which provided frameworks for structured problem-solving and stakeholder engagement; and,
- Cracking the Case, presented by Professor Philip Batterham, focusing on interdisciplinary teamwork and effective communication of evidence-based proposals.



Student participants networking with academic and industry experts.

Teams also benefited from mentorship sessions with academic and industry advisors, who provided guidance on the design, feasibility and sustainability of their proposed interventions. Participants were encouraged to take a cross-disciplinary and systems-thinking approach, integrating public health, economics, behavioural science, environmental health and policy perspectives.

Head of the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, Professor Sant-Rayn Pasricha, commended the participants for their professionalism and commitment.

“Responding to a call, working with a multidisciplinary team to design a comprehensive proposal, identifying timelines, budgets and feasibility - that’s what we do every day as global health practitioners,” he said.

Feedback from participants indicated development in soft skills such as cross-disciplinary collaboration, problem-solving, interpersonal communication, pitch delivery and research alongside a deeper understanding of real-world global health systems.

As part of their prize, members of the winning Universiti Malaya team and a selected University of Melbourne delegation are eligible to represent the Indo-Pacific region at the Emory Morningside Global Health Case Competition in 2026. This opportunity will enable students to showcase their skills on an international stage and strengthen The University of Melbourne’s role in fostering global health leadership and collaboration.

Preparations are currently underway for the 2026 Indo-Pacific Global Health Case Competition, to be held in September, aiming to strengthen regional partnerships and address emerging public health priorities across the Indo-Pacific region.